

CORT

L500N Electro Acoustic & Earth Mini F Travel Guitar

Two tasty electro-acoustics from Cort: One full size folk model, plus a cool mini travel guitar

There's no doubt about it, we are in a world where, 'bigger' is generally referred to as 'better'. Many aspects of life reflect this attitude and it's often the same with guitars. Even the small bodied acoustic guitar is often put in the shade by its larger brothers, that are- yes- bigger in most crucial departments. But many players find small bodied guitars offer several useful advantages.

Words: Joey Setano

CORT

L500N Electro Acoustic

SRP £429.00

All prices incl VAT

CONTACT:

HC Distribution

T: 00 353 59 9134268

W: www.cort-guitars.co.uk

WHAT IS IT?

Small folk cutaway electro acoustic

WHY SHOULD I WANT ONE?

A fab alternative to big bodied acoustic guitars, offering oodles of tone, superb build and playability.

Guitar players of a smaller stature can sometimes struggle to get to grips with the larger, lower bout and body depth of a traditional jumbo or dreadnought acoustic and even some bigger players seem to prefer the physical freedom of a smaller bodied model, which leaves them free to concentrate more on their playing.

Whilst the market for affordable electro-acoustic guitars is currently crowded and very competitive, Cort continue to remain way above the radar, maintaining a steady flow of well made and decent-sounding guitars from one of the biggest guitar factories in the Far East.

Light Fantastic

The Cort L500N Luce Series of small bodied acoustic and electro acoustic guitars is aptly named: La Luce is Italian for 'light' and this series includes parlour and concert-sized guitars alongside our review model, the small folk cutaway, L500N. All of the Luce Series acoustics feature high-glossed, abalone inlaid headstocks capped with mahogany, and the L500N also includes a set of nifty-looking open-g geared Grover tuners with traditional vintage-style buttons. The deep grained mahogany neck joins the body at the 14th fret and is cosmetically tipped at the heel with a maple cap. Playability-wise the L500N has a finger friendly string spacing, measuring a respectable 43mm wide at the nut and 53mm wide at the 12th fret, with a rosewood fingerboard graced with small cross-shaped position

markers and 20 tidy frets, which are a fairly narrow gauge in keeping with the guitar's compact profile. The soft Venetian cutaway compliments the L500's small folk design, with its rounded profile and relatively deep rims. The body has a neatly applied high gloss lacquer, highlighting the close grain of the solid cedar top, and again, the scrumptious grain of the rich red solid mahogany back and sides, which like the headstock and fingerboard, are bound with tortoise shell. From an aesthetic viewpoint the L500 is a very tidy looking little guitar; a rosewood bridge and a multi-ringed abalone soundhole rosette top off a generally pleasing set of visuals. The body's gloss lacquer finish is applied using an electrostatic process that Cort claims is 30% thinner than a normal lacquer coating, the idea being that the thinner finish offers a normal level of resistance to wear and tear without compromising the guitar's natural resonance. Stick with us for another minute or two and we'll see how this claim holds up...

demonstrates a faultless construction. A quick internal inspection reveals consistently neat workmanship, without a drop of over-zealous gluing to be seen; in fact, you could almost believe that this guitar was totally hand constructed over several weeks instead of being mass produced in a big factory.

Little Growler

Whilst a small bodied acoustic isn't designed to produce the same mighty output as a full-sized jumbo or dreadnought, compact acoustic guitars generally have a more delicate voice alongside fairly decent projection. The Fingerstyle



Made in China, the L500

CORT L500N & EARTH MINI F GUITARS



Aero-dynamic: The Fishman aero is linked to a Sonicore transducer pickup

whilst retaining lower note definition without any boom or mush even when the low end was boosted with the EQ. Needless to say, the warmth and separation are crystal clear without any brash overtones.

braced spruce top with a rugged open-pore finish that just screams 'take me anywhere'. Mahogany also forms the neck, which, with its stacked heel and dovetail body joint, is topped with a generously thick slice of rosewood for the fingerboard, and home for a very neat and tidy fret job. Thankfully the fretboard width remains pretty standard at 43mm at the nut, with ample string spacing for the chubbiest fingers, and a full scale length of the 22.75in.

The chrome covered tuners have cool looking black resin buttons, which have a nice rubbery feel to them, and seem low geared, a nice touch that again makes the Earth Mini F seem larger than it really is. This takes us to the all important question how does it sound? Well, I could just sum this up in one sentence, and say that whilst strumming in the garden one evening with the Earth Mini F, a neighbour leant over the fence and asked... "What was the point of making a small guitar if it sounded just like the bigger ones!?"

Indeed, this guitar is loud, has a very vibrant woody sound with a long throw, and is delightfully warm and responsive for chords and lead work. You can forget any perceived idea of limited plinky plonky, Ukulele sonics; for such a small acoustic, the low end is certainly beefy enough to lend a convincing weight to the tone and the overall sound is huge compared to the dinky dimensions.

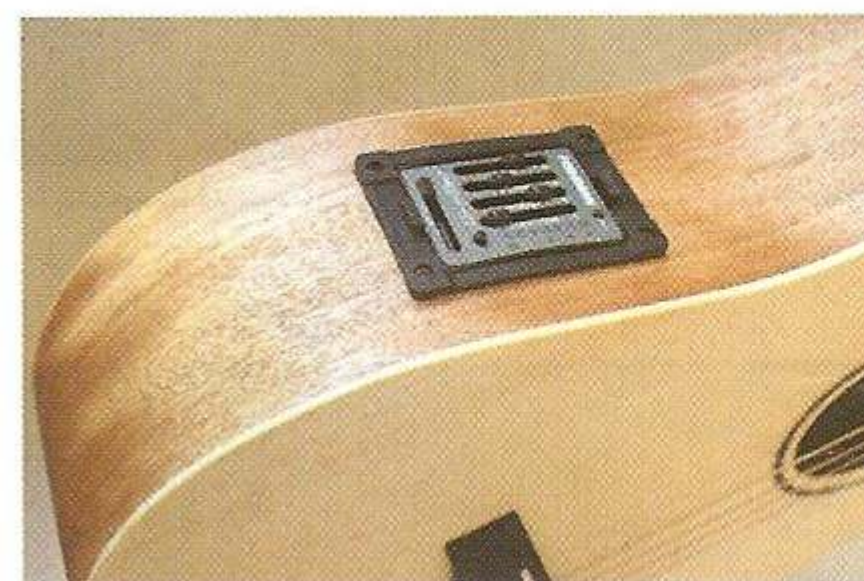
The Earth Mini is loaded with a Fishman Classic 4T preamp and Sonicore pickup. Full control comes courtesy of sliders for Volume, Bass, Middle, Treble and Brilliance, and a push button to activate the built-in digital chromatic tuner.

Amplified, this guitar is a delight to play, the EQ soon backs up any loss of low end, but again, for general use, setting the tone controls around midway seems to push the guitar's natural timbre to the fore and the tone is so huge that it would certainly hold its head up just about any playing environment. Put it this way, as long as there's electricity up that mountain, there's nothing to hold you back and at least you also get a spiffing gig bag to keep the snow off.

HC Distribution make the bold claim that they give each and every Cort guitar a thorough inspection and set up before onward shipping to the stores, and it's a thumbs up from me, as the playability on both these guitars matches their convincing build quality and great tones. **PM**



Cort Earth Mini F



The electro acoustic Earth Mini F features a Fishman classic 4T preamp

▶ players can use this versatility to allow greater control over playing dynamics; switching from more aggressive playing to a barely perceptible whisper in a single stroke and it takes a guitar with a good overall tonal balance to be able to do this convincingly. The body components obviously play a key role in the instrument's tone and character and the L500N uses cedar for its soundboard, which seems to be an ideal choice as cedar's faster note response seems to suit the L500N's nimble dimensions and breathy tone. Acoustically, the L500N seems to have a pleasing bias toward the mid and treble frequencies, while the low end certainly isn't lacking, remaining tight and focused, even when the low E was tuned-down a whole step to D. There's an air of satisfaction here, first position chords sing away, whilst Barre chords have an even balance and a level response without over domination of the low end. This is certainly a vibrant and very responsive little guitar.

By varying the position of the strumming hand on the strings, I found that it is possible to find a wide range of usable tones and timbres: For example there is a clear difference between the clear piercing treble from plucking the strings at the ponticello position (ooh-get you! Oh alright, at the bridge) and the warmer, bassier tones that come when you change your right hand position to the 'dolce' area, towards the end of the fingerboard.

The electrics are Fishman's Aero pre amp system, which features the pre-wired Sonicore under-saddle pickup. Housed within a neat control module are controls for volume, bass, middle and treble, with push buttons for a handy phase control (to help eliminate feedback on stage) and built-in digital tuner with its own circular display with red and green tuning status LEDs. Cool. Amplified, the L500N retains its fundamental character, and with the Aero's EQ set flat, the mids dodged that harsh honky timbre all too often associated with smaller body electro acoustics,

We tried this guitar in the studio and in a live situation, and it was encouraging to hear how the L500N projected without being smothered by the band's bass frequencies.

Interestingly, Cort supply a matching self adhesive tortoise shell effect scratchplate with the guitar that the player can fit themselves if they prefer to protect the vulnerable top from pick scratches and the like. It's nice to have the option but if you can't trust yourself to fit the scratchplate without it going wonky, best let your local dealer do it for you.

Earth Mini F travelling electro acoustic.

Summer's here, and a lot of you are cleaning out last year's crisps from the rucksack, either preparing for festivals or simply enjoying the great outdoors. But what about room for that pint-sized travelling acoustic? We don't want our readers to think we have a vendetta about jumbos or big bodied acoustics, indeed we have several big box boomers in the office here, but trekking one round Nepal? Er...no fanks!

There's a host of travel guitars on the market, some fold up, some fold down, and some are just plain and simply scaled-down versions of a traditional acoustic guitar. Cort's Earth Mini F electro version is basically a mini dreadnought, harkening from the company's long standing flagship Earth Series acoustic and electro acoustic models.

But whilst some manufactures have drastically reduced the body size to within millimetres of it falling into the black hole in the middle, the Earth Mini, is still big enough to function as a decent tool for camp fire songs, couch noodling, full-on gigs, or a fab tool to have lying around in the studio. Apart from the red acrylic soundhole rosette, the Earth Mini F is amiss of any over the top sartorial frills: There are no niceties like binding and abalone inlays but you do get very neat and tidy construction. The body consists of laminated mahogany for the back and sides, and a solid Engelmann, 'X'

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Earth Mini F Acoustic

SRP	£189.00
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WHAT IS IT?

Mini dreadnought electro acoustic travel guitar

WHY SHOULD I WANT ONE?

Why Not? Serious sounds from a mini guitar, it's more than fun